



Illinois Human Services Commission Public Hearing

September 8, 2012

1701 West Superior St.
Chicago, IL 60622
Tel 312.563.5800
Fax 312.563.5810

1347 West Erie
Chicago, IL 60642
Tel 312.666.3430
Fax 312.666.3955

Erie Neighborhood House is one of the oldest social service institutions in the city of Chicago, celebrating 140 years of service this year. Our mission is to promote a just and inclusive society by strengthening low-income, primarily Latino families through skill-building, access to critical resources, advocacy and collaborative action. Our work began with immigrant families that were looking for work, education, and to contribute to their community. This work continues today and is even more critical with an increasing immigrant population but even more challenging due to state budget cuts.

Erie Neighborhood House is also an active partner with the **Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR)**, a coalition of over 130 ethnic community based organizations across the state of Illinois who educate and organize immigrant and refugee communities to assert their rights; promote citizenship and civic participation; monitor, analyze, and advocate on immigrant-related issues; and, inform the general public about the contributions of immigrants and refugees.

The State of Illinois is home to 1.8 million immigrants, the sixth largest immigrant population of any state in the nation. According to the 2010 Census, Illinois' population is now 13.5% foreign-born. **Immigrants accounted for half of the state's total growth in the past decade, with the Latino Population increasing 32.5% and the Asian Population increasing 38.6%.**

Over the past ten years, ICIRR has worked in partnership with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to serve the immigrant community through programs funded from the **Immigrant Integration Services Line** under the Human Capital Development Division of the Department of Human Services.



Critical programs such as the **Immigrant Family Resource Program** which provides equal access to food assistance, health care and income support for immigrant families that are unable to receive assistance from other means as well as the **New Americans Initiative Citizenship Program**, that directly assists immigrants to become citizens and New Illinoisans who can now become more integrated in their communities, obtain better jobs, buy homes and give back to their communities. In addition, the We Want to Learn English program has increased English as a Second Language (ESL) learning in Illinois by linking native born volunteers with immigrants as tutors – tutoring in English, Civic Education and after school programs – enhancing education and fostering community integration. The **We Want to Learn English** program has grown to a State/Federal/Local partnership, working with the Federal AmeriCorps program to provide a 76% match to the 24% state funds invested. Through these programs, ICIRR has served 728,230 families through 72 organizations in 52 languages across the State. ICIRR has directly assisted 50,840 green card holders become citizens and has worked with over 13,809 Illinoisans who volunteered over 124,470 hours.

Erie Neighborhood House has been a proud and successful provider within the New Americans Initiative. Through this state funded initiative, we have been able to provide, in collaboration with our other NAI state partners, over 52,000 completed citizen applications, over 120,000 outreach contacts, 1,125 workshops, and over 300,000 individuals have been assisted through website and phone assistance. Erie recognizes the Committee's "Budgeting for Results" method of allocating funds, and this is just one example of the numbers of **individuals that are impacted through IDHS and New American Initiative funds. However, these numbers could be even higher if the immigrant services budget line matched the need and the population.**

The Immigrant Services Line under the **Illinois Department of Human Services** is roughly 1/100th of one percent of the State budget and serves Illinois' immigrants which make up 13.5% of our state's population and 17.5% of our workforce. In total, the Immigrant Integration Services are currently funded at \$8.09 Million for FY 2011 – which is 1/100th of the state budget. Over the past three years the Immigrant Integration Services line has been cut by 22% while the immigrant population has increased exponentially.



In Illinois there are approximately 450,000 undocumented immigrants, 500,000 legal permanent residents, and 770,000 naturalized U.S. citizens. Through the NAI initiative and funding for organizations such as the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, the 1.7 million individuals listed above can receive education, training, citizenship support, and resources to help them achieve greater self-sufficiency and in turn contribute back to their community and to their home state of Illinois.

The FY12 reductions in the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) budget have made us unable to provide services to immigrants to the most in need in our immigrant communities. The immigrant population is growing outside of Chicago and instead of increasing immigrant services to reflect the size of the taxpaying population, our budget was cut within the city and funds were then moved to the suburbs and downstate leaving the immigrant communities within the city proper with hardest hit and the least investment and resources.

Erie Neighborhood House and the other immigrant providers across the state will not be able to maintain our programs and will certainly not be able to help impact the issues facing the growing immigrant community with fewer resources. In addition, with these continued budget cuts, the infrastructure of immigrant serving CBOs that has taken decades to build up will continue collapsing across the state and no longer exist. We have the data to show that the immigrant services line in Illinois is being used effectively and efficiently to create change amongst immigrant families and communities and we would like to thank the Illinois Human Services Commission for continuing to support our very needed and critical work.

Sincerely,

Celena Roldan, Executive Director
